

FITNESS

Exercise: Getting Fit For Life

“I don’t have time.” • “I’m too old—I might hurt myself.” • “I’d be too embarrassed at a gym with all those fit young people around.”

Sound familiar? Maybe one of these is the reason you aren’t physically active or exercising. But, in fact, scientists now know that it’s usually more dangerous to not exercise, no matter how old you are. And you don’t need to buy fancy clothes or belong to a gym to become more active.

People don’t get enough physical activity. Here are some reasons why they should:

- Lack of physical activity and not eating the right foods, taken together, are the second greatest underlying cause of death in the United States. (Smoking is the number one cause.)
- Exercise can help people feel better and enjoy life more. No one is too old, too young or too out of shape to be more active.
- Regular exercise can prevent or delay some diseases like cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. It can also perk up your mood and help depression, too.
- Being active can help people to stay independent, enjoy life and improve their quality of life.

So, make physical activity a part of your everyday life. Find things you enjoy. Go for brisk walks. Ride a bike. Dance. Work around the house and in the yard. Take care of your garden. Climb stairs. Rake leaves. Do a variety of things that keep you moving and active.

Remember you can still exercise even if you have a long-term condition like heart disease or diabetes. In fact, physical activity may help your illness, but only if it’s done during times when your condition is under control. During flare-ups, exercise could be harmful. If you have any of the following problems, it’s important to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program:

1. A chronic disease, or a high risk of getting one—for example, if you smoke, if you are obese, or if you have a family history of a long-term disease
2. Any new symptom you haven’t talked about with your doctor
3. Chest pain
4. Shortness of breath
5. The feeling that your heart is skipping, racing, or fluttering
6. Blood clots
7. Infections or fever
8. Unplanned weight loss
9. Foot or ankle sores that won’t heal
10. Joint swelling
11. Pain or trouble walking after you’ve fallen
12. A bleeding or detached retina, eye surgery, or laser treatment
13. A hernia
14. Hip surgery
15. Feel sick or lethargic most of the time

